

Essex Forests & Wetlands Conservation Action Plan



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What is Conservation Action Planning?

- Conservation Action Planning (CAP) is an effective and efficient way to conserve many species and habitats at the same time.
- CAPs in Carolinian Canada focus on Biodiversity Hotspots – areas of high concentration of species and habitat diversity, and often home to many rare species.
- Local groups work together to develop and implement a plan, with common goals and strategies.

Essex Forests & Wetlands Natural Heritage



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- The Essex Forests and Wetlands CAP covers 109,958.6 ha of forests, wetlands, prairies and beaches in the most south-westerly portion of Ontario along the Lake Erie shore. The area supports plants and animals characteristic of the Carolinian Life Zone, many of which are provincially, nationally and globally rare. The CAP area includes a number of Provincially Significant Wetlands and Areas of Natural and Scientific Interest, as well as a National Park, a Provincial Park and a Ramsar Site.
- The Essex area was originally inhabited by First Nations people, and the landscape was likely modified to some degree by this presence. The Essex area was then visited by Europeans in the late 1600s and the first permanent European settlers took up residence in the 1820s-1830s. Essex County has a mild climate which is extremely well-suited to agriculture and allows for a wide variety of crops to be grown. Agriculture is the dominant land use, with most areas averaging at least 80% coverage by farmland.
- Despite the fact that nearly 92% of the landscape has undergone conversion to agricultural and urban land uses, the natural portions which remain contain the greatest number of rare species in Ontario including over 50 Species at Risk. The CAP also includes globally rare prairie, woodland and dune ecosystems.
- CAP completed in 2009.



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Common Five-lined Skink © S. Gillingwater

Conservation Targets:

1. Upland Deciduous Forests
2. Prairies and Savannas
3. Inland Wetlands and Swamps
4. Coastal Marshes
5. Beaches and Shorelines
6. Riparian, River and Creek Systems
7. Ecological Services on Farms
8. Reptiles and Amphibians

Major Impacts:

Municipal and agricultural drains; Residential and cottage development; Common Reed; Mesopredators (e.g. raccoons, skunks); Terrestrial recreational activities such as ATVs; Road development and maintenance; Terrestrial and Aquatic invasive species; Shipping lanes and related effects of dredging and channel widening; Roadkill of sensitive species; Fragmentation of natural habitat; Effluents from agricultural practices; Shoreline hardening

Conservation Objectives & Strategic Actions

1. Securement - Land and Water Protection

Actions: Secure high priority lands for conservation.

2. Stewardship - Land and Water Management

Actions:

- *Prepare Baseline Documentation Reports and Property Management Plans (PMPs) and implement stewardship actions on high priority lands*
- *Identify and map species richness and condition of all prairie/savannah remnants, restore fire regime to Ojibway Prairie sites via prescribed burns at regular intervals, keep informed about the latest research and fieldwork regarding prairie management*
- *Keep informed on current research to control Common Reed, establish a pilot Common Reed control site and prepare a regional-scale control program if/when proven viable*
- *Participate in Emerald Ash Borer response program and replant alternative species of tree seedling*
- *Research raccoon abundance and support management mechanisms*
- *Educate community conservation groups about impact of Garlic Mustard and advise about control programs*
- *Restore native habitat on secured lands*



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Invasive Common Reed © S. Gillingwater



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Conservation Objectives & Strategic Actions



3. Stewardship – Species Management

Actions:

- Identify location of core reptile habitat and determine where to buffer, link and protect reptile habitat
- Facilitate hunting as appropriate on ERCA and NCC lands
- Enhance populations of Round-leaved Greenbrier by collecting and propagating local seeds to restore mixed-gender dynamic to existing populations; assess all existing sites and implement restoration
- Enhance populations of Kentucky Coffee-tree by including this species in restoration plantings where appropriate, collect and propagate local seeds to restore mixed-gender dynamic to existing populations; assess all existing sites and implement restoration

4. Communications, Education and Awareness

Actions:

- Offer an education program based on hands-on activities related to ecology for local school children to encourage stewardship in younger age groups.
- Facilitate a coordinated multi-partner landowner contact program which targets and educates landowners on the Endangered Species Act
- Create 5 year funded communication program to promote support and awareness of vulnerable reptile species in CAP
- Meet with local ATV groups to increase awareness about potential impact of activity, and work with groups to come up with a strategy that directs use away from sensitive natural areas.



5. Government Relations, Law and Policy

Actions:

- Provide input into Essex County Official Plan
- Increase surveillance, monitoring and enforcement of violations regarding policies related to recreation and animal and plant gathering in the CAP, suggest to Ontario Finance Minister that fines from violations be directed into natural area restoration



6. Stewardship – Livelihood, Economic and Other Incentives

Actions: Research and promote positive incentive approaches for farmers

7. Philanthropy, Marketing and Capacity Building

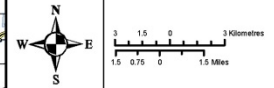
Actions:

- Seek partnership with Drainage Superintendents
- Support and complement ongoing efforts to address the ecological integrity of Point Pelee National Park and Hillman Marsh
- Raise required funds to implement actions within the CAP



Essex Forests & Wetlands Natural Area

Conservation Context



- Key to Features**
- Essex Forests & Wetlands Natural Area
 - ANSI
 - Important Bird Area
 - NCC Property
 - National Park
 - Crown Game Sanctuary
 - Other Federal Land
 - Provincial Nature Reserve
 - Parks Ontario
 - Provincially Significant Wetland
 - Conservation Authority
 - City of Windsor Spring Garden Natural Area
 - Public Parks
 - St. Clair College Prairie
- Infrastructure Features**
- Primary Road Network
 - Secondary Road Network
 - Parcel Fabric
- Other Features**
- Hydrology Network



LAKE ERIE



Disclaimer: This map is illustrative only. Do not rely on it as being a precise indicator of privately-owned land, roads, locations of features, nor as a guide to navigation. This map may contain omissions or errors.

Data Sources:
 Nature Conservancy of Canada - Ontario Region, 2008
 Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR), 2008
 Essex Region Conservation Authority (ERCA), 2009
 Municipal Property Assessment Corporation (MPAC), 2009

Projection: UTM Zone 17, NAD83
 ©The Nature Conservancy of Canada - Ontario Region
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Partners

- Bird Studies Canada
- Canada South Land Trust
- Carolinian Canada Coalition
- Essex County Stewardship Network
- Essex Region Conservation Authority
- Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources
- The Nature Conservancy of Canada
- Parks Canada
- Tallgrass Ontario
- The Nature Conservancy, Michigan Program



For more information about Conservation Action Planning and how you can be involved please visit www.carolinian.org

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